

King Quail

FAMILY: *Phasianidae*

GENUS: *Coturnix*

SPECIES: *chinensis*

OTHER NAMES: Chinese Quail.

Description:

Small, quiet and unobtrusive the King Quail is commonly found in pairs or small parties of around 5 or six, although groups as large as 40 have been recorded. Unlike the Stubble Quail, the King Quail does not appear to follow seasonal food sources.

King Quail live exclusively on the ground and will hide in dense undergrowth rather than fly up when disturbed. Like so many other quail, it will burst suddenly into flight when almost trodden on.

The body plumage of the male is brown, mottled with black and faint cream central feather shafts on the back. Wings are grey-brown and the face, upper breast and sides of breast slate blue. The lower face and throat bear a white bib with a black stripe. The underside, flanks and undertail are rusty brown, the bill black and the legs and feet a creamy yellow.

The female differs from the male in that she is a deep brown on the upper surface with a buff face and throat. The underside is a cream-buff with tight dusky barring.

Juveniles resemble females and downy young are a uniform brown, lighter on the face and have a pair of faint (lighter) lines on the back.

Length: 120-130mm.

Subspecies:

None, but several races are found in south-east Asia and New Guinea.

Status:

In the wild: common to abundant

In aviculture: very common

Threats:

There are no formally recognised threatening processes for this species, but its abundance has been affected by human activities. The draining and clearing of its habitat for pasture and cropping has restricted its habitat and the release of a Chinese race by the Victorian Acclimatisation Society in the mid 1800's have brought about the potential for interbreeding and thus affecting the population's genetic integrity.

Distribution:

Coastal wetlands of Northern and Eastern Mainland Australia west to the Kimberleys. there is an isolated outlier in the Mt Lofty Ranges (SA). It is also found throughout the Indonesian Archipelagos to the Phillipines, South East Asia, India and China.

Habitat:

Tall rank grass in boggy country, heaths and swamps. King Quail are rarely found in crops except those which have heavy weed growth.

Diet:

Seeds of grasses and insects.

Breeding:

Is tightly bound to seasonal flushes of grass growth and seeding. May occur twice in a season.. The nest is a shallow scrape in the ground lined with fine grass and placed in dense cover such as under a bush or tussock.

In captivity King Quail will readily nest on the ground. Thick shrubbery or (preferably) tussock grasses will help to provide the shelter and security they require.

Sexual Maturity:**Courtship Display:****Clutch:**

4 to 5 (sometimes as many as 10) light brown eggs with brown freckles. (19x25mm).

Incubation period: 21 days.

The young leave the nest almost immediately after hatching. Parents force the young to leave the breeding territory at about 6 weeks. At this point the young are fully feathered and about two-thirds grown.

Mutations and Hybrids:

There are two recognised races in Australia. One is smaller and is found in the northwest; the other slightly larger form is found throughout the southeast.